



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## LESSONS IN WOOD-ENGRAVING.

I.

ENGRAVING on wood is the process of cutting away from the surface of a block, otherwise prepared for printing from, every portion of the wood except the lines which form the picture, leaving these standing

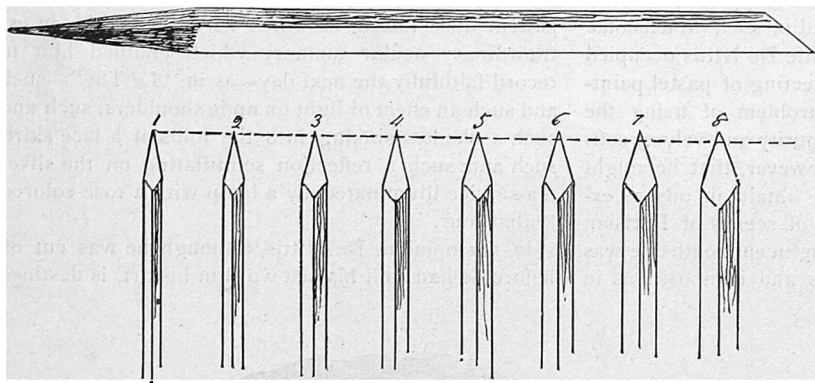


FIG. 1.

to receive the ink and be impressed upon the paper. There are three principal ways of reproducing designs in black and white upon paper by means of printing. In order to have a clear conception of what these are, and how they differ, it is necessary to understand first what printing is. To begin with, comparatively few persons have a correct idea of what printing ink is.

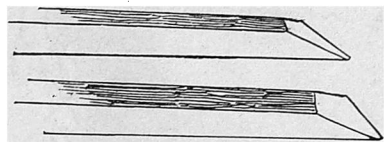


FIG. 2.

It has nothing except its color in common with the ordinary writing ink with which we are all familiar. It is substantially a thick oil paint, the basis of which is linseed oil made viscid and ropy by much boiling, and the admixture of some other materials, so that it becomes an unctuous substance adhering readily and strongly to paper, and drying quickly when so applied

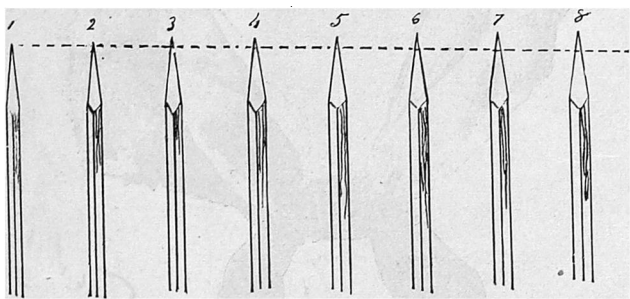


FIG. 3.

in a very thin film. Lampblack being ground up with this medium produces printing ink, which, when displayed in various forms upon paper, is the means of communicating and perpetuating the knowledge of everything which man has achieved. For the purpose of attaching it to the paper in these various forms it is first placed upon a properly prepared surface. Paper

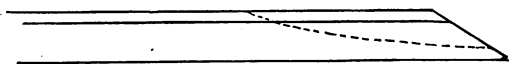


FIG. 4.

being now applied to this surface with great pressure readily absorbs the ink from it, and you have the result—a poem or a picture as the case may be.

Now, as was said before, there are three principal ways of preparing this surface for communicating the ink to the paper in the desired forms. First, there is a method of placing the subject upon a plain surface, which is, like paper, receptive of either water or oil.

The drawing being made upon this surface with a greasy material, it is then wetted all over. The surface where not drawn upon absorbs the water, while the greasy drawing repels it. The ink, also greasy, is now applied to the whole. The drawing, not being affected by the water, receives the ink, while the rest of the surface, being wet, rejects it. Now the paper is pressed upon the whole, and takes the ink from it, the result being that the drawing is reproduced upon the paper. This process represents that branch of the art of which lithography is the type.

In the second place, there is a method of reproduction in which a smooth and polished surface has lines incised in it, exactly corresponding to the lines of a pen and ink drawing, lighter or heavier as the design may require. The whole is now covered with the glutinous ink, which is then wiped entirely from the polished surface, leaving the incised lines filled with it. Now, as before, soft paper being forcibly pressed upon the whole surface, draws the ink out of the lines in which it is imbedded, and again the drawing is reproduced. This is etching, steel-engraving, and the like.

Finally there is the process by means of which by far the greatest amount of knowledge, verbal or pictorial, is communicated to the world. In this process those lines which are to appear black upon the paper form the printing surface, every part which is to remain white being so sunken that the ink does not touch it at all, and that it does not reach the paper which is impressed and blackened by the lines forming the general surface. In the case of ordinary books and newspapers, this surface is formed by types placed closely side by side, and bound together in a solid mass. In the case of a picture or other illustration, all the lines which we see in the completed print stand at the same height as the surface of the type, while the part which remains white is below that surface, and is not touched either by the ink or the paper. For the purpose of producing this result wood-engraving is the process most generally used. It is also the oldest method, having, in fact, preceded printing as now practised.

The purpose at present is to explain in a simple and concise manner the art of wood-engraving, so that any person of ordinary ability may begin the practice, and produce a block which may be printed from. So much as this may be accomplished in a comparatively short time, although, as in all other arts, the best results can only be attained through long and earnest study.

We will begin with the first requisite, the raw material—wood. Many different kinds of wood have been and are used for engraving upon, but boxwood is that

which is generally employed, and invariably so for all fine work, book illustrations and the like. It is sawed into slices about an inch thick, and across the log, so that the picture is made on the end of the grain. This is in order that lines may be cut with equal facility in any direction, while if it were made on the side, the wood would splinter and chip out when cut across the grain. Some large and coarse work, such as theatrical show-bills, is cut on the side of ordinary boards; but it is always

done on softer wood than box, generally pine, and requires different tools—more like carvers' tools than those for wood-engraving as commonly practised.

When obtained from the men who make a business of preparing it, the surface of the block is perfectly level, smooth, and polished. To make it ready for drawing upon a very thin coating of white in gum water is given it. Any white water color, such as

Chinese white, will answer the purpose. This must be put on so thinly as not to hide the grain, since a thicker body would be very inconvenient to cut through, and would make the drawing liable to chip off before the tool.

Let us suppose you have your block prepared in this manner for working upon. The design for engraving is first drawn in the ordinary manner upon paper. Take a piece of the finest transparent tracing paper

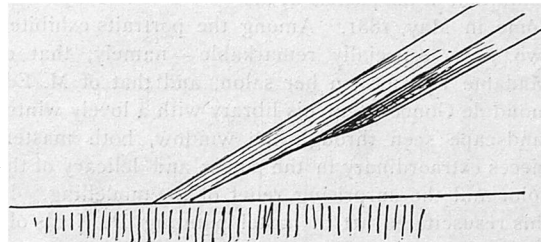


FIG. 5.

and lay it over the drawing. On this with a medium black lead-pencil trace the outlines and all details which you may think necessary; then turn the tracing over, and lay it with the pencil marks against the face of the prepared block; go over every line with a hard, smooth, rounded point of any kind, like the end of a knitting-needle, for instance. You will now have an outline on the block reversed—that is to say, it will resemble the reflection of the picture in a mirror. This reversal is a necessity in everything intended for printing. It may give you some trouble at first, but you will soon become accustomed to it and "work

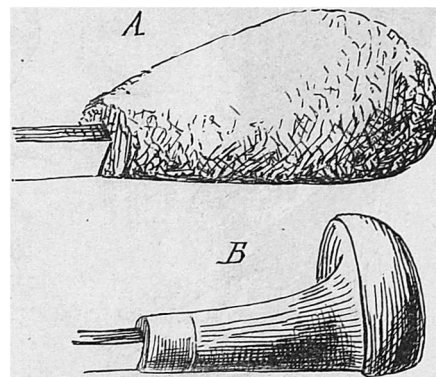


FIG. 6.

backward" without difficulty. Now finish the drawing on the block in whatever style you desire—pen and ink, pencil, or India ink wash, in accordance with the original design, and when it is satisfactory you are ready for the crowning work, engraving.

A great part of the work done of late years is not drawn upon the block at all, but the design being made much larger than the engraving is intended to be, is then reduced, and placed upon the wood by means of photography. This is very convenient, but, like all other labor-saving processes, it has its disadvantages. This, however, is not the place to dis-

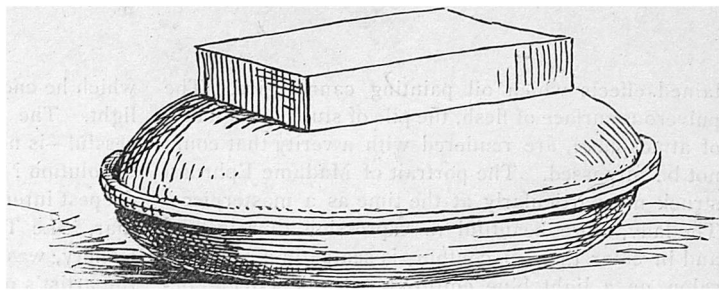


FIG. 7.

cuss this point. Should you choose photography as your method, you have only to make your design in any material you may prefer, oil or water, only it must be in black and white, and larger than your engraving is to be, so that it may come out clearly and sharply on the block.

So much for the material. Now for the tools. They are simple in form and not many in numbers.

They may be classed under two principal heads—"gravers" and "tint tools," being the technical names by which they are known. "Gravers" as they come from the maker are of the general form shown in Fig. 1, differing in thickness, as may be seen from the series of numbered points. It will be observed that although they vary in thickness, the points are all acute angles. In order to fit them for use they are graded; that is, they are ground down and rounded along the bottom edge in gradual succession from the thinnest to the thickest, until they assume the form shown in Fig. 2. This is in order that white lines of various thickness may be taken out neatly without pressing the tool too deeply into the wood. The tool is also more easily turned and managed.

"Tint tools" are of the same general form, but with their sides more nearly parallel, whether they are thick or thin, so that sinking them a little deeper in the wood does not perceptibly widen the white line which they cut. They are for the purpose of making the various degrees of shade in an engraving corresponding to washes in a drawing—skies, smooth water, and so on. These are produced by a series of lines which are parallel and equidistant in each particular shade. These lines may be straight, curved, or irregular, but they must have a certain uniformity to produce the effect desired. The tools are shown in Fig. 3. They must be treated in the same manner as the gravers, that is, ground down in regular gradation. The dotted lines in Figs. 1 and 3 show this gradation.

When the tools are once properly shaped they are kept sharp by means of a fine oil-stone. As the tool never enters deeply into the wood, it is only the lower part of it which does any work; it is therefore better to grind the top in a long slope back from near the point, as shown by the dotted line in Fig. 4. When the tool becomes dull it is sharpened by holding the face steadily against the oil-stone and rubbing it back and forth, being careful to keep it always at the same angle. (See Fig. 5.) The face of the tool being reduced to a small surface according to Fig. 4, a few strokes on the stone are sufficient to sharpen it, and there is much less danger of losing the proper angle, or getting the edges rounded than there would be if it were necessary to rub down the whole thickness of the tool every time the point required sharpening.

Handles of two forms are used. One made of cork shaped like A, Fig. 6, is most common in America, while that turned of wood like B is more generally used by English engravers. You can select the one which fits your hand best. If you can find an engraver who will fit you up a set of tools to begin with that will be the better way. If you have no such opportunity, you can buy them ready fitted. After you have worked awhile, you will have a better understanding of what you require, and will then be able to arrange them to suit yourself.

For resting the block upon while engraving, there is nothing so good as a sandbag or pad, which resembles a circular pincushion six or eight inches in diameter, made of leather and filled with sand. (See Fig. 7.) This makes a firm and solid support to the block, and at the same time allows it to be turned easily in any direction. This has to be done continually as the direction of the lines changes, since the tool, as held in the hand, always points nearly in the same direction.

You may use a magnifying glass or not, as best suits your eyes. If you use one, the best way is to have a stand with a jointed arm which allows the glass to be placed in any position desired, leaving both hands free to manage the work. I should strongly recommend you to do without a glass until failing sight calls for one. The microscopic is not the highest form of art, and some of the best engraving the world has ever seen has been done with the unassisted eye. But eyes are not all alike, and some find that glasses help them. C. M. J.

THERE are two excellent ways of discovering any weakness in a picture you have in hand. One is to look at it through a magnifying glass, which enlarges and makes its shortcomings more noticeable; the other, to reverse it in a mirror. The latter is an old and ever popular method, for the eye becomes so accustomed to looking at a thing in one way that it ceases to be critical. The moment the picture is re-

versed it becomes a fresh picture, and in nine cases out of ten errors hitherto unnoticed reveal themselves.

#### WORKING ART CLUBS.

"NEXT to an art school," said Mr. Walter Shirlaw, in one of his forcible talks on art to a local art student's club last spring, "I know nothing more likely to develop good and encourage talent than a working art club. Emulation is a great factor in education, and interchange of ideas another. These two the art club supplies."

The speaker uttered a simple and valuable truth. The art club, next to the art school itself, is the most important vehicle for the development of a practical knowledge of and a general taste for art which we have at our command. How thoroughly this is appreciated by artists is shown by the fact that in New York, well supplied as it is with art schools and exhibitions, the artists still find it to their interest to form associations like the Kit-Kat, the Tile, Salmagundi, Art, and other clubs for mutual intercourse in some cases, for actual work in others. At the Kit-Kat and Salmagundi clubs, especially, men who have long outgrown the limits of the art school are found working as seriously as students in their first term.

These clubs give to their members a certain commercial cohesion and potentiality as well as a field for personal contact. The members of the Tile Club have all been benefited, directly and indirectly, by the publicity which the club has enjoyed, and which, as individuals, they could scarcely have acquired. The Salmagundi Club is one of the most powerful exhibition organizations in the country, and the Art Club exercises no less influence on matters artistic here, because its operations are carried on without a flourish of trumpets.

If these remarks are true in their application to art clubs in a great city, how much more forcible must their application be to localities where the art school is unknown, and where talent is left to struggle along a thorny path, unencouraged and unaided! There is scarcely a village in the land in which there are not half a dozen people of fine artistic feeling and good natural gifts who are without the means of developing themselves. Yet by the simple process of forming an art club they would be in a position to secure a very great measure of the practical knowledge now beyond their reach.

There are no formidable difficulties besetting the formation of such a club. We will assume that six young men and women conclude to constitute themselves an association. They hold a meeting, canvass the situation, come to an understanding as to what they desire, and the work is done. The expenses of such a club are insignificant. A small initiation fee will cover the cost of a few casts and standard works on art and of some practical periodical. There need be no outlay for rental, for the club can assemble, as the Salmagundi does, at the residence of one or another of the members in rotation. The Salmagundi began this practice in its early and impoverished days; now that it is prosperous and powerful, it keeps it up for the social gratification this interchange of hospitalities affords.

The dues of an art club should be kept at the minimum figure, like the initiation fee. But there should be initiation fees and dues by all means, for they raise the club above the level of a mere casual assemblage. The members having paid their dues will desire to enjoy their benefits; they will experience a sense of responsibility to the club which they otherwise would not. In the matter of officers, an energetic member for secretary, who can also act as treasurer, will be all that the actual business interests of a small association require. Meetings should be held at least once a week, and as much oftener as is desired. For a working art club three or at most four evenings a week would be sufficient, and the work done by the members during the rest of the time should, by all means, be presented for general inspection and discussion at these meetings. Such discussion and criticism go far toward correcting errors and encouraging renewed perseverance.

A very good plan, which is in practice in most working art clubs, is to give out a subject for illustration by the members, the subject usually consisting of a single word, as "Joy," "Despair," "Darkness," or

whatever it may be. These subjects each member should work out at home, giving his or her idea of it pictorially. The various compositions should be exhibited together. These competitions frequently bring out some beautiful ideas, even if they are often crudely expressed. But they are expressed. The student is taught to tell what he or she thinks, and the first step in the practical development of invention is thus made.

One thing should be remembered in connection with an art club—that nothing succeeds without serious attention. With this fact well in mind, good fellowship will lighten hard work, and each member will help his neighbors by the common example of unselfish devotion to a common cause. A. T.

#### ABOUT MATERIALS FOR OIL PAINTING.

AN artist laughingly remarked at the sale of the pictures of John La Farge last spring, that the artist lost money on everything he painted. "He uses none but the best colors," he said, "and puts so much of them on that they leave no margin of profit for him."

Mr. La Farge, however much he may merit this humorous exaggeration, has certainly the reputation of a most exacting man in the matter of materials, and he is a wise man to be so. "Cheap tools make cheap work," says an old proverb, and however fair a face the work may present at the start it will not last. As a matter of fact, indeed, you cannot produce with cheap materials the first results which come from the use of the best. Pictures can be painted with sign-painters' colors, but no matter how skilful the hand that paints them they will have a raw and vulgar look beside works created out of the tubes of the great colormen.

It is particularly essential to beginners in art that their tools shall be good. In the first place, good tools facilitate work, and in the second they produce results most likely to encourage the student to further effort. No money is lost in purchasing good brushes, canvases, and colors.

In canvases there is now little choice between the foreign and the domestic. The English and French canvases are very satisfactorily competed with by our own manufacturers. German canvases are by no means to be commended, artists say. For broad and vigorous work practical men recommend the Roman and twilled varieties. The best panels and millboards still come from abroad. All paper should be avoided for painting in oil. It is absorbent and the colors never recover their true value, even when they are varnished up.

French colors still hold their own in the estimation of our painters. The English being much more accessible—for all colormen do not deal in French stock—are, however, most largely used. Good colors are made here, but artists complain that our colormen do not, as a rule, exercise sufficient care in the selection of their materials. They prepare and put them up well enough, but the ingredients cannot be relied on.

There is certainly justice in this complaint, but we have houses whose pigments enjoy equal favor with those made abroad. These do not, however, sell for less than the foreign article, so it may be broadly assumed that colors which are cheap in price are cheap in quality too.

In the matter of brushes the tyro is likely to be more seriously embarrassed than in the selection of any other materials. Even the best brushes are not regular in construction, though their quality may be the same. The desideratum with a bristle brush is firmness combined with elasticity. Thick, bushy brushes should not be accepted. Artists commonly secure the qualities they require in their brushes by cutting away some of the bristles along the outer layers, the general assumption being that almost all brushes manufactured there are made too dense and solid. French brushes have the best repute.

"What sort of an easel shall I get," once asked a pupil of Couture. "It is immaterial, my boy," replied the master, "nail your canvases to the wall if you can get the proper light on it, and make a palette of the lid of a cigar-box. But see that the canvases you paint on and the colors and brushes you paint with are as good as you can buy." The advice of the great Frenchman will be as sound at the end of the world as it was when he delivered it.